

WYCOMBE Wanderers ended 1977 in the best possible way on Saturday — a handsome 3-0 triumph over local rivals Slough Town in the Isthmian League at Wexham Park.

And the Wycombe players had double cause to celebrate into the early hours of the New Year. For this was one of the Blues' best victories of the season. Having lost 3-1 to the Rebels at Loakes Park earlier in the campaign, few gave them much of a chance against their 'bogey' side Slough Town.

But the Wycombe players rose to the occasion and in the end, ran out convincing winners. Even the Slough supporters behind the Press box had to hand it to Wanderers, grudgingly handing out praise like 'Wycombe were the better side on the day'. How true.

It was Wycombe's will to win

Slough Town 0, Wycombe Wanderers 3 REPORT BY STUART EARP

that proved the deciding factor. From the start they looked the more determined side and once the second goal had gone in, Slough seemed to give up the ghost.

Although this was an excellent team performance, some players inevitably caught the eye. I felt the game was won and lost in the muddy morass of midfield. Slough's pitch was a sorry state — a schoolboy game was played there on Wednesday — and the heavy surface taxed the strength of both sides. But it was here that Wycombe possessed match-winners in Graham Mackenzie and John Priestley, both of whom enjoyed excellent games.

Mackenzie, full of running and ideas, capped his performance with a fine goal while Priestley revelled in the heavy going and tidied up much loose ball in the middle.

In front of a large holiday crowd, Slough started well with Barry Friend beating Birdseye in the first 30 seconds but shooting meekly at Peter Spittle. Then, amidst the sound of squelching boots, Dave Russell robbed Howard Kennedy just as he was about to shoot on the edge of the box.

The pace of Paul Lee and Russell caused Wycombe's

defence several anxious moments and they gave away several free kicks. At the other end Wanderers rarely made inroads into the Slough penalty area. The best effort came from Kennedy, whose awkward shot was pushed away by Trevor Porter in the 21st minute. A Phillips 'up and under' from the corner had Porter in trouble and Wanderers gained confidence from these attacks.

It was during this spell of Wycombe pressure that Dylan Evans gave them the lead. Mick Holifield was brought down on the edge of the box and Tony Horseman's free kick found Phillips at the far post. The big centre back powered in a header which struck the bar and after Kennedy's follow-up had been blocked, Evans slid the ball home.

The goal certainly had its effect on Slough who were unable to find their earlier rhythm. Indeed, Evans might have made it 2-0 before the break when his header clipped the top of the crossbar.

So Wycombe came in at half-time with a one-goal lead but at the start of the new period it seemed Slough were destined to equalise. In the 52nd minute Friend again rounded Birdseye

and crossed. Russell's shot was beaten out by Spittle and then Bob Davies kicked Keiron Somers' follow-up off the line.

Spittle's handling kept Slough at bay during this crucial period and it was just when the Rebels were pushing forward that Wycombe caught them on the break. Mackenzie timed his through ball to Holifield perfectly after 13 minutes. Mick beat off the challenge of former Tottenham star Phil Beal and was then faced with the task of beating Porter. At first he seemed to have lost the ball but Porter brought him down and referee Gregory had no doubts about the penalty. Kennedy drove the kick straight at Porter but the 'keeper had dived to his left and the ball sailed into the net to make it 2-0.

REARDON MISSED

Two minutes later Horseman put Holifield away again but this time the flag was up for offside. Slough's defence, however, looked woefully square at times and both Terry Reardon and Beal looked short of pace. Tim Turl had a fine game in the middle but Slough missed Reardon's aggression in midfield — his rightful position.

After the second goal Wanderers took a grip on the game and cruised comfortably until the end. They made it 3-0 and helped themselves to a £40 bonus after 66 minutes when Mackenzie supported the front men superbly. No-one spotted him as he came up at the far post to meet a Davies' cross first time and drive a shot under Porter's body.

Reardon's foul on Mackenzie halted another promising run while Spittle saved Russell's snap shot at the other end. It was a rare Slough attack, though, for Wanderers were well on top at this stage.

Holifield scooped a five yard chance over after good work by substitute Harris while Davies made his second clearance off the line when diverting Alan Gane's 80th minute shot away.

In the last quarter Wycombe might have had more goals when Priestley shrugged off three tackles and shot inches wide and then Harris broke clean through but lost the ball as he tried to turn inside.

As Wanderers trooped off at the end, they thoroughly deserved their applause for a marvellous finale to the year.

SLOUGH: T. Porter; P. Beal, T. Reardon, T. Turl, R. Mackay; D. Russell, A. Gane, I. Cooke; B. Friend, K. Somers, P. Lee. Sub P. Feely (not used).

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies; G. Mackenzie, J. Priestley, H. Kennedy; A. Horseman (sub D. Harris 69 mins), D. Evans, M. Holifield.

Referee: C. Gregory (Woking).

Half-time: 0-1. **Goalscorers:** Evans (29), Kennedy pen (58), Mackenzie (66).